

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 DODE-00 IO-13 ACDA-12
L-03 MCE-00 NRC-05 EA-10 /103 W
-----016601 150759Z /14

R 141313Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0931
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 5882

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MMOL, IN
SUBJECT: INDIAN ACQUISITION OF A DPSA:
CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS

REF: (A) STATE 092067; (B) NEW DELHI 5793

1. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE BRITISH IN WASHINGTON ABOUT THE INDIAN ACQUISITION OF A DPSA, PM DIRECTOR GELB SAID THAT WE WERE THINKING ABOUT RAISING THE SUBJECT WITH THE SOVIETS ON MAY 4 (PARA 10 REF A). THE EMBASSY APPRECIATES AND AGREES WITH THE CONCLUSION THAT IF CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS ARE TO BE RESTRAINED, IT CAN ONLY BE WITH THE COOPERATION OF ALL THE MAJOR SUPPLIERS AND THAT THIS INCLUDES THE USSR. WE SEE SOUTH ASIA AS AN AREA WHERE THE USG SHOULD ENLIST THE PARTICIPATION OF OTHERS IN SUPPORT OF ITS POLICY OF RESTRICTING THE TRANSFER OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS. HOWEVER, IF IT IS DECIDED THAT THE USSR CAN PROFITABLY BE BROUGHT INTO GENERAL DISCUSSIONS ABOUT ARMS IN SOUTH ASIA, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE USG SHOULD RAISE THE INDIAN DPSA PROJECT WITH THE USSR.

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2. WHILE THE GOI APPRECIATES THAT THERE IS CONCERN IN THE US ABOUT ITS PLANS TO ACQUIRE A DPSA -- THE FOREIGN MINISTER RECENTLY RAISED THE TOPIC WITH THE AMBASSADOR (REFTEL B), THE GOI WOULD TAKE STRONG EXCEPTION TO WHAT IT WOULD PERCEIVE AS A "GANG-UP" BY OTHERS ACTUALLY TO DENY IT THIS WEAPON. INDIANS WOULD SEE THIS AS ANALOGOUS TO THE NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS

CLUB, I.E., AN EFFORT BY THE TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED NATIONS TO LIMIT THE ABILITY OF AN LDC TO ACQUIRE THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY, PARTICULARLY SO IN THE CASE OF THE DPSA FOR WHICH CO-PRODUCTION IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE PACKAGE.

3. ACCORDING TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER (REFTEL B), THERE IS NO URGENCY WITHIN THE GOI TO REACH A DECISION ON THE DPSA AND THE DECISION WOULD BE PENDING AT THE TIME OF THE PM'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON IN JUNE. DELAY IN THE DPSA DECISION MAY REFLECT POLITICAL RIVALRIES WITHIN THE CABINET (SEE NEW DELHI 5257) AS WELL AS DIFFERENCES OVER FINANCIAL PRIORITIES. IF THE GOI FINALLY DECIDES AGAINST ACQUIRING A DPSA AT THIS TIME, IT WILL NOT BE BECAUSE OF THE INTERVENTION OF OUTSIDERS. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE ODDS ARE IN FAVOR OF INDIA'S ACQUIRING A DPSA IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE.

4. WHATEVER THE TIME FRAME FOR THE ACQUISITION OF THE DPSA MAY BE, ALL AVAILABLE INFORMATION POINTS TO THE JAGUAR OR THE MIRAGE F-1 AS THE LIKELY CHOICE. WHILE THE INDIANS AT ONE POINT INDICATED AN INTEREST IN THE MIG-25, THE SOVIETS SAID IT WAS NOT AVAILABLE. THE MIG-23, WHICH THE SOVIETS HAVE PUSHED, APPARENTLY IS NOT WHAT THE INDIANS WANT. MOREOVER, THE GOI HAS AS ONE OF ITS GOALS THE DIVERSIFICATION OF ITS SOURCES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE TO TURN TO THE USSR FOR THE DPSA. IN SHORT, THE SOVIETS PROBABLY

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ABLY ARE NOT REAL CONTENDERS IN THE DPSA RUNNING, AND THERE IS THEREFORE LITTLE POINT IN ATTEMPTING TO DISUADE THEM FROM SUPPLYING INDIA A DPSA.

5. IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN PERSUADING THE BRITISH AND THE FRENCH TO WITHDRAW THEIR OFFERS, OUR READING IS THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD BE MORE THAN PLEASED TO STEP IN. AS THE DEPARTMENT REALIZES, THE USSR ATTACHES CONSIDERABLE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO SOUTH ASIA. AS INDIA TURNS INCREASINGLY TO THE WEST IN GENERAL AND THE UNITED STATES IN PARTICULAR FOR TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY, THE USSR WILL ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN WHATEVER INFLUENCE IS AVAILABLE TO IT BY CONTINUING TO BE INDIA'S PRINCIPAL FOREIGN SOURCE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. WE DOUBT THAT THEY WOULD HESITATE TO SELL INDIA A DPSA BECAUSE OF A BENEFIT TO THEM IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE US DUE TO COOPERATION IN THE MATTER OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS.

6. IF THE PURPOSE OF RAISING THE DPSA WITH THE SOVIETS IS TO DEMONSTRATE OUR BONA FIDES BY POINTING OUT THAT WE ARE PUTTING PRESSURE ON THE BRITISH AND THE FRENCH, THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. GIVEN THE RESISTANCE OF THE

BRITISH (AND PRESUMABLY THE FRENCH) TO OUR ARGUMENTS, WE WOULD RATHER APPEAR INEFFECTUAL AT CONTROLLING OUR ALLIES IN SOVIET EYES.

7. FURTHERMORE, GIVEN THE POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC INTEREST OF THE USSR IN INDIA, WE BELIEVE THE SOVIETS WOULD BE QUICK TO EXPLOIT ANY DISCUSSIONS WE HAD WITH THEM ABOUT THE DPSA. IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER THE SOVIETS WOULD INFORM THE GOI OF SUCH US-USSR TALKS. THEY WOULD URGE THE INDIANS TO APPRECIATE WHO THEIR TRUE FRIENDS WERE AND THAT THE WORLD'S TWO LARGEST DEMOCRACIES HAD DIVERGENT INTERESTS. THE INDIANS WOULD SEE THE USG NOT ONLY AS INSENSITIVE TO THEIR LEGITIMATE SECURITY NEEDS BUT AS DISRUPTING THEIR RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.

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8. IN SUM, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT IF TALKS ARE HELD WITH THE USSR ABOUT CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS IN SOUTH ASIA, THEY BE IN GENERAL TERMS WITHOUT FOCUSING ON THE INDIAN DPSA PROJECT. WE SEE NO UTILITY IN RAISING THIS SPECIFIC SUBJECT WITH THE SOVIETS, EITHER IN TERMS OF DISSUADING A POTENTIAL SUPPLIER OR IN TERMS OF OUR GENERAL ARMS TRANSFERS OBJECTIVES. ALL THAT WE WOULD BE DOING IS GIVING THE SOVIETS A STICK WITH WHICH TO BEAT US.
GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ACQUISITION, FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NEWDE05882
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780162-0399
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780455/aaaabugx.tel
Line Count: 145
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d19b01b0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: 78 STATE 92067, 78 NEW DELHI 5793
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2962763
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDIAN ACQUISITION OF A DPSSA: CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS
TAGS: MASS, MMOL, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d19b01b0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014